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Article

A Cover Story: *Music Educators Journal* and Historical-Political Narrativity

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Abstract: This article reports results of a comprehensive content analysis of the 644 *Music Educators Journal* (MEJ) covers published between September 1914 and December 2015. For more than a century, MEJ's covers conveyed carefully selected visual and textual imagery to all members of the growing association. The results of the content analysis were secondarily analyzed for elements of historical narrativity and political narrativity in music education. Results indicate that imagery related to nationalism and patriotism increased during times of conflict, the representation of people diversified as time progressed, and there is evidence that the first images of Black people on MEJ covers were intentionally placed for maximum impact. The article includes related historical information about MEJ and its evolving editorial processes.

Keywords: content analysis; historical narrativity; *Music Educators Journal*; nationalism; political narrativity; publishing; editing; cover images

1. Introduction

The *Music Educators Journal* is an official publication of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME). NAfME is based in the United States and has over 130,000 members. The Association was founded as the Music Supervisors National Conference (MSNC) in 1907, renamed as the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) in 1934, and again as MENC: The National Association for Music Education in 1988 (the acronym NAfME was formalized in 2011). The corresponding journal was founded in 1914 as *Music Supervisors' Bulletin* (Figure 1), was renamed *Music Supervisors' Journal* in 1915 and again as *Music Educators Journal* (MEJ) in 1934. MEJ is presently the world's oldest continuously published and most widely read journal about music teaching and learning [1]. The December 2015 issue (Figure 2) marked the final distribution of printed copies to all NAfME members and journal subscribers [2]. Subsequent issues were scheduled for digital dissemination to the NAfME membership. As of the December 2015 issue, the print circulation of MEJ was 67,000 copies, with additional digital access through libraries and databases. Two recent studies rank *Music Educators Journal* as one of the most influential publications in music education, particularly since 2006 [3,4].

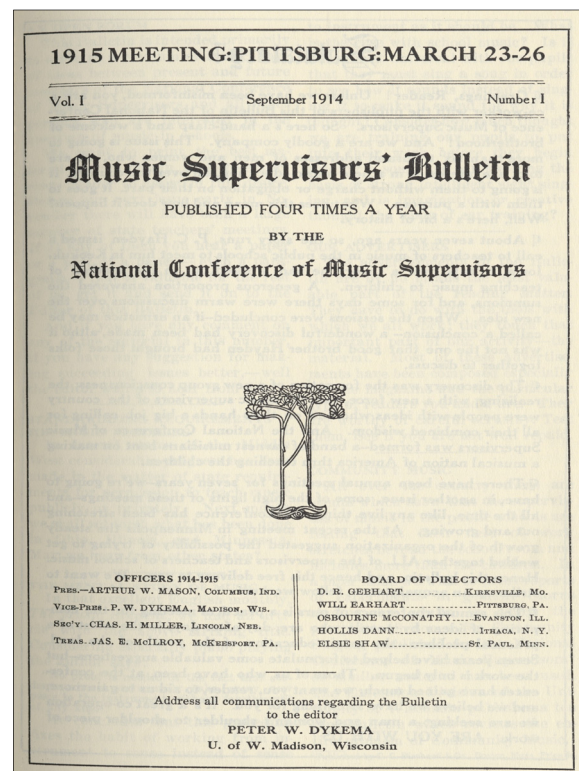


Figure 1. *Music Supervisors' Bulletin*, September 1914.



Figure 2. *Music Educators Journal*, December 2015.

MEJ's covers conveyed carefully selected visual and textual imagery to all members of the growing association over the course of a century. Though the journal was widely distributed from 1914 to 1929, receipt of *MEJ* became a benefit of association membership in 1930 [5]. The issues per volume

year ranged from four to nine. This article reports results of a comprehensive analysis of the 644 *Music Educators Journal* covers published between September 1914 and December 2015 with a goal of providing an introductory, exploratory assessment of cover content. The purposes of this study were to conduct an analysis of all visual and textual content found on *MEJ* covers, and to identify evidence of editorial intent in the creation and/or selection of cover designs across the century.

The *Music Educators Journal* has evolved from a simple newsletter-style publication to a professionally managed, full-color, peer-reviewed academic journal. Through this development, the cover of each issue has been uniquely designed, in contrast to the static covers published for nearly all other journals in the field. There has been no other detailed content analysis of the external covers, though there have been two reviews of *MEJ*'s basic cover design changes [6] and many analyses of the internal articles [5,7–13]. The June 2014 centennial issue of *MEJ* included several of these reviews, focusing on advocacy [14], philosophy [15], and the definition of American musical culture [16].

1.1. Historical-Political Narrativity

For 102 years, *Music Educators Journal* covers presented elements of design, graphics, text, and images to convey messages about the Association, the field of music education, and the specific contents of the journal. Different individuals were tasked with choosing cover material throughout *MEJ*'s history; there has been no consistent definition of “editor” during the journal's first hundred years. These covers became recognizable elements of music education's “story”, instantly known to each reader when he or she first viewed the newest issue. *MEJ*'s covers tell some of the history of the profession as it has developed within the United States. Historian and humanist Hayden White has written, with italics in the original:

Within professional historical studies, the narrative has been viewed for the most part neither as a product of a theory nor as the basis for a method, but rather as a *form of discourse* which may or may not be used for the representation of historical events, depending upon whether the primary aim is to *describe* a situation, *analyze* a historical process, or *tell* a story [17] (p. 2).

White views all history as narrativized, as authors relate “real events, events that really happened, rather than imaginary events, events invented by the narrator” [17] (p. 2). This telling of actual events separates history from fiction. Even so, the interplay of human subjectivities is inextricably tied to the final narrative form, even as methodological procedures and interpretative rigor are employed to discover fact and maintain validity [18]. White holds that each historical narrative “tells a story, each can be said to have a plot, and each has an argument to make about its subject” [18] (p. 113).

Benedict suggests that music education has its own set of historical narratives, with many of these also exhibiting elements of political narrativity [19]. Stockley defines several characteristics of political narratives, three among these are (1) the story and the events must affect people and their world views; (2) political storytellers should explain the world to their listeners and enable them to understand their place within it; and (3) a true political storyteller will give people hope—or at least, reassurance about themselves and their future [20]. These narratives serve as frames through which viewers/readers are presented with information designed to elicit desired responses and viewpoints. Narrative framing, both historical and political, has been part of the music education profession since the 1907 founding of Music Supervisors' National Conference [19,21].

1.2. Previous Analyses of Periodical Cover Content

The covers of *Music Educators Journal* set it apart from the other scholarly publications of NAFME. Most of the field's journals are characterized by recognizable cover designs that do not vary except for the identifying text. *MEJ*'s covers are uniquely designed for each issue and have, over time, featured wide variations in color, visual imagery, textual information, and graphics. Of the multitude of periodicals produced for music educators in the United States, the five with the widest distributions to both practitioners and academics feature similarly distinctive covers that change for each issue: *American String Teacher*, *Choral Journal*, *The Instrumentalist*, and *Music Educators Journal*.

There has been no large-scale analysis of *Music Educators Journal* covers. There have been two content analyses of academic journal covers, including a limited review of *Health Education* covers [22] and a broader review of the depiction of gendered images on the covers of medical journals [23]. The topic of gender is most common among published analyses of periodical cover content. These have included the cover images of young women in the Australian magazine *Cleo* [24] and the depictions of beauty on covers of *Cosmopolitan* [25]. Reviews of health magazines have examined representations of stereotypical masculinity and femininity [26,27]. These analyses, each of fashion and/or health magazines, indicate that periodical covers reflect rather than promote changes in society and culture.

Other analyses have revealed gradual changes in how gender and race have been portrayed on periodical covers across time. These include a review of nearly 900 *Time* and *Newsweek* covers to explore portrayals of women and racial minorities since 1953 [28], a survey of the representation of women of color on mainstream women's magazines [29], and as part of a broader study, the depiction of African American stereotypes on the covers of United States periodicals [30]. One study focused on the rendering of inanimate objects—automobiles—on the cover of *Motor*, a publication of the famed Federation of Danish Motorists [31].

These content analyses of periodical covers each employed basic data-gathering techniques such as checklists, simple description, and counting. Bell's analysis additionally applied techniques of visual semiotic analysis [24]. These techniques were utilized in the present study of *Music Educators Journal* covers.

2. Materials and Methods

The first phase of content analysis involved development of a classification system for the content of *Music Educators Journal* cover images (color, topic, text, basic layout, photo versus artwork, etc.) according to accepted guidelines of visual narrative analysis [32]. A goal for the first phase was to define the content using descriptive statistics. Archival content from *Music Educators Journal* became widely available through JSTOR in 2007, coinciding with the shift from in-house publication to production by SAGE. At that time, all available cover images were uploaded from various sources and made available to researchers as jpeg files. Those responsible for scanning and uploading were unable to travel to NAFME archives, resulting in the omission of cover images. At the onset of data collection for this study, 70.3% ($n = 453$) of the cover images were available online through JSTOR. Most images prior to 1944 were missing, as were 34 images from 1944 to 1981. A total of 182 cover images were missing from the combined databases. Image scans of 179 of the missing covers were obtained by the researcher at the NAFME Archives in the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library in the School of Music at the University of Maryland (College Park, MD, USA). Three missing cover images were obtained from personal libraries following a series of requests on listserves and online networking. This project resulted in assembly of the only complete set of *MEJ's* 644 cover images from inception through 2015.

Two complementary protocols were utilized in the second and third phases of content analysis. The second stage of analysis followed the visual social semiotic methods of Kress and van Leeuwen [33]. Kress and van Leeuwen refer to visual imagery as containing both narrative information that relates a process or event and conceptual information that relates stable essences or states of being. Narrative information is primarily conveyed through compositional relationships, called "vectors", between elements or objects in the image [33] (p. 59). In contrast, drawings that do not illustrate either action or process are inferred to depict conceptual, unchanging information. Compositional meaning was deduced through examination of four elements: (1) information value; (2) framing; (3) salience; and (4) modality, or the congruence of the image with what might be visible in reality.

The third phase of content analysis examined the descriptive information derived from the earlier phases according to the mixed methodological protocol of Bell, in which coded visual qualitative content is subsequently analyzed using quantitative techniques [24]. Bell's approach was developed specifically for the analysis of multiple visual images appearing in a series over time, such as for the

analysis of magazine cover images over a period of many decades. One element of Bell's approach is a priori hypothesis development. Hypotheses were developed after the second phase of analysis, during which the two most frequent themes found in the data were "nationalistic imagery" and "images of people". These were further developed into two hypotheses: "imagery related to nationalism increased during times of conflict", and "the representation of people diversified as time progressed". The descriptive data was then re-examined to determine support for the various hypotheses.

The results of the content analysis were secondarily analyzed for elements of historical narrativity as defined by White [17,18,34,35] and political narrativity in music education as defined by Benedict [19]. A critical element involved consideration of the data as authored and, therefore, intentional. The definition of author centered on Phelan and Rabinowitz's concept of "implied authorship" as a vehicle for addressing issues of historical significance and presumed intent [36].

3. Findings

The findings of this content analysis are presented in three sections: (1) an overview of the cover designs across time; (2) data related to the two a priori hypotheses; and (3) intentionality and the first images of Black people.

3.1. One Hundred and Two Years of Cover Designs

The first eight issues of the journal (1914 to 1916, one volume each of *Music Supervisors' Bulletin* and *Music Supervisors' Journal*) were in digest size with 32 pages, smaller than today's journal. Each cover design was identical, printed in black and white with a simple graphic and identifying text. A similar design, though with more graphic intensity and variation, characterized the covers of volumes 4 and 5 (Figure 3). A line drawing of a Grecian harp was added in 1921 with volume 8. The design changed slightly in 1922 with volume 9's drawing of an ancient female figure playing a flute (Figure 4).

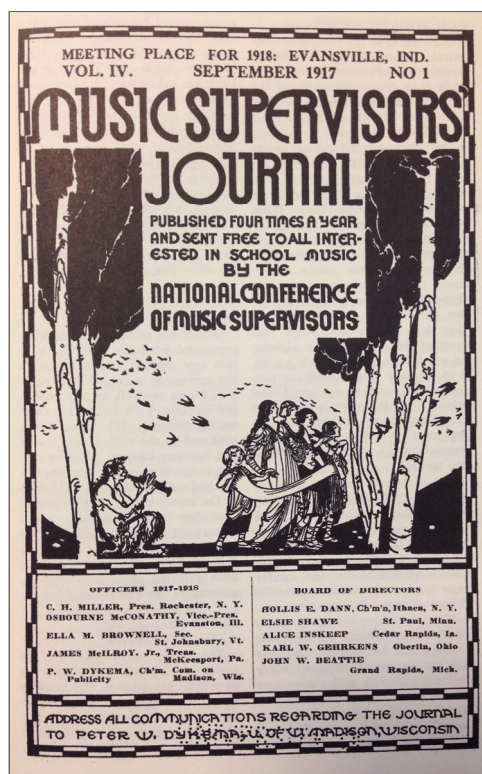


Figure 3. *Music Supervisors' Journal*, September 1917.

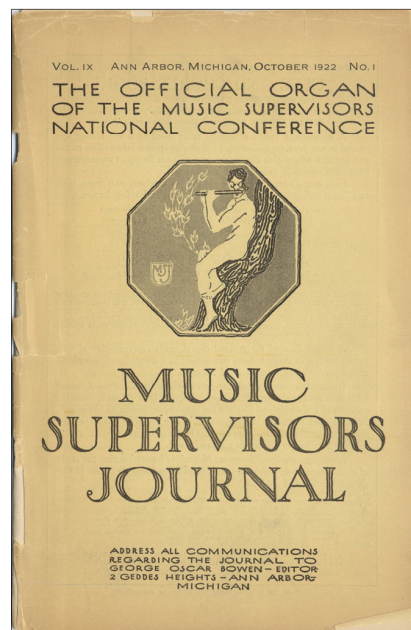


Figure 4. *Music Supervisors Journal*, October 1922.

Similar line drawings adorned covers until the first photograph appeared in October 1926 on the cover of volume 13, number 1 (Figure 5). This issue also marked the final disappearance of the apostrophe that had previously appeared intermittently after the word “Supervisors.” The journal and its organization’s titles included apostrophes in their early years: *Music Supervisors’ National Conference* and *Music Supervisors’ Bulletin*, for example. The apostrophes in both titles disappeared when Paul J. Weaver assumed editorial responsibility for the journal. There is no recorded explanation for why the apostrophes went missing or who decided upon their removal. The October 1926 cover image was of George Oscar Bowen, then president of MSNC. Images of regional and national leaders, both male and female, appeared for the next twenty issues. The slogan “Music for Every Child—Every Child for Music” appeared on all but two covers from May 1924 to December 1939.

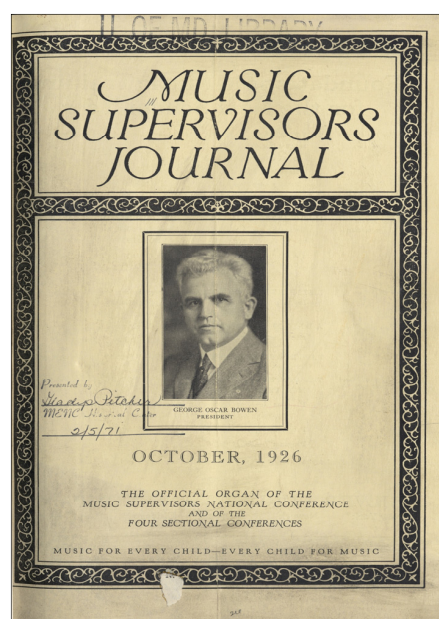


Figure 5. *Music Supervisors Journal*, October 1926.

Color first appeared on a cover of the journal as green line art in October 1930 (volume 17, number 1) (Figure 6). Color has been included, in some format, on every cover except for four (February 1940, October and April 1972, and May 1974) through the present day. The first color photograph to appear on a *Music Educators Journal* cover was of a high school orchestra in rehearsal (January 1953) (Figure 7). Cover designs continued to experiment with color and photography through the 1960s, including reproductions of significant music-related paintings. The September/October 1964 and October 1972 covers (Figures 8 and 9) included the only horizontal masthead placements in the journal's history. Covers during the 1970s were marked by uniqueness, boldness, and bright colors—with a trend toward depicting teachers and students in instructional settings. In contrast, covers during the 1980s gradually became more formal and less inventive. Photographs (and occasional artwork) appeared on nearly every cover from the 1980s through June 2014 (Figure 10); graphic designs replaced photographs beginning in September 2014. Meanwhile, covers during the 1990s gradually incorporated increasing amounts of text to indicate the article contents of the particular issue. Whereas earlier volumes focused on changes of imagery, changes of text characterized covers in the 1990s and 2000s. For instance, all issues from 1992 to 2002 utilized the identical cover design; though the photograph/artwork and text changed from issue to issue, the result created an aura of stability (Figure 11).

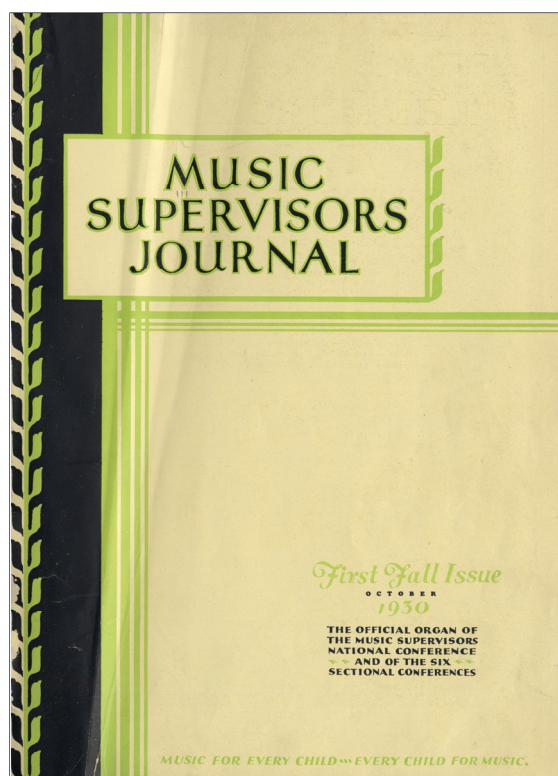


Figure 6. *Music Supervisors Journal*, October 1930.



Figure 7. *Music Educators Journal*, January 1953.



Figure 8. *Music Educators Journal*, September/October 1964.

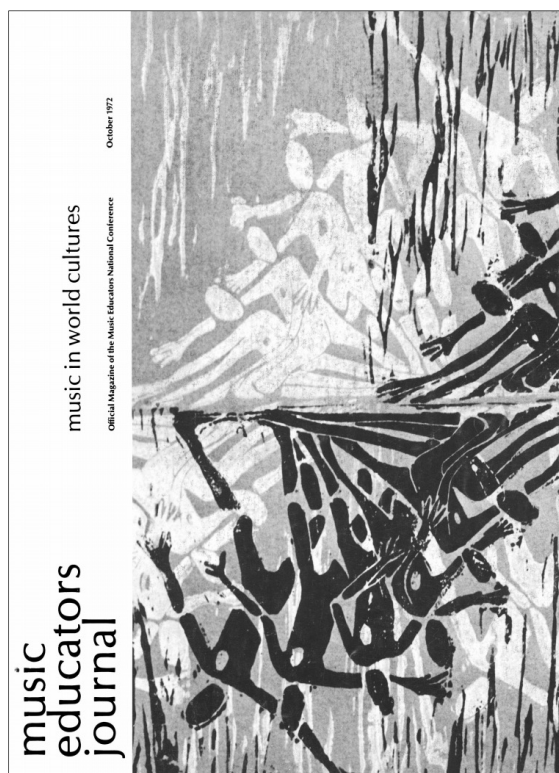


Figure 9. *Music Educators Journal*, October 1972.

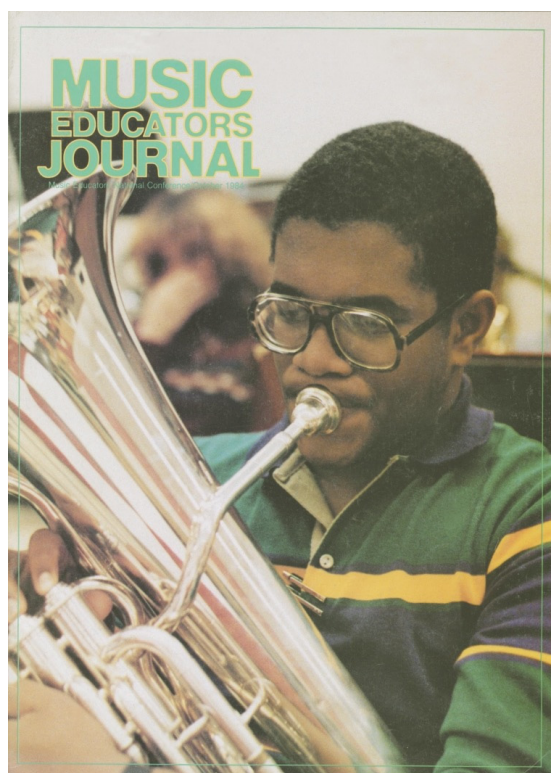


Figure 10. *Music Educators Journal*, October 1984.

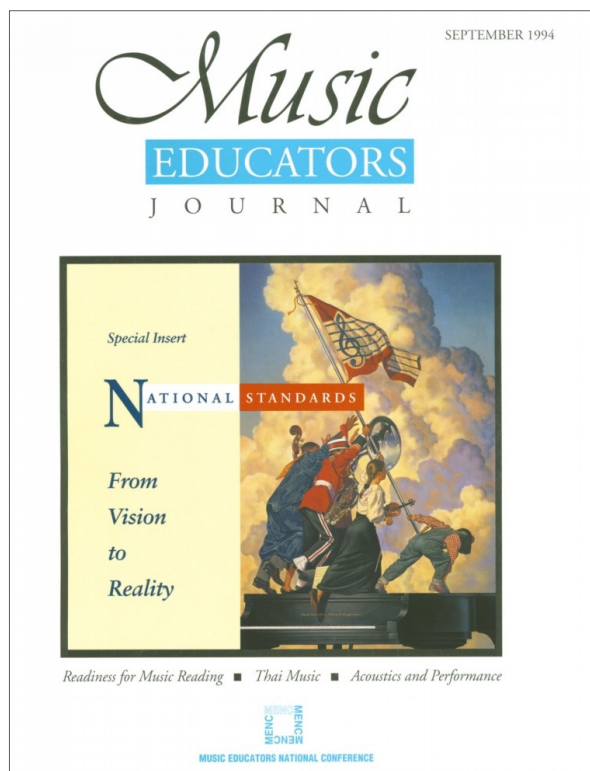


Figure 11. *Music Educators Journal*, September 1994.

The pages of *Music Educators Journal* and her predecessors have contained only a few editorial discussions about the journal's cover design or content. The most notable exception was a series of 24 articles/columns titled "On the Cover" (or "The Picture on the Cover", etc.) that ran intermittently from 1944 to 1964. Since then, similar articles have appeared only occasionally, mostly during the 1980s. The September 2008 issue marked the transition to publication by SAGE Publications. The two subsequent cover designs have increasingly emphasized the academic nature of the journal. September 2011 (volume 98, number 1) was the first issue with cover text referencing all article content (Figure 12).

The journal's designers and editors used cover images to reflect anniversary years of the Association and the journal. For instance, the first full-color cover was printed in silver to mark the 25th anniversary of the organization (March 1932) and gold highlighted its 50th anniversary (February/March 1956). Similarly, the 60th volume of the journal was noted with a collage of previous cover images in September 1974 (Figure 13), and a parallel design marked the 100th volume in June 2014 (Figure 14).

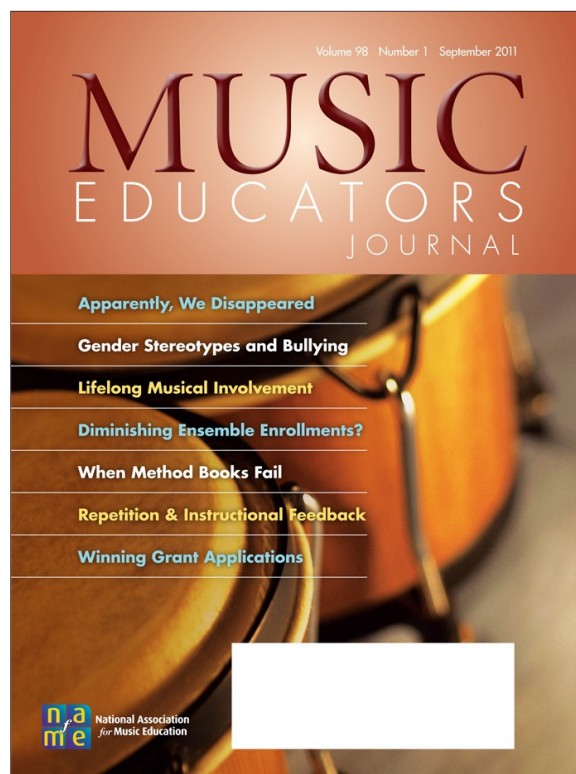


Figure 12. Music Educators Journal, September 2011.



Figure 13. Music Educators Journal, September 1974.

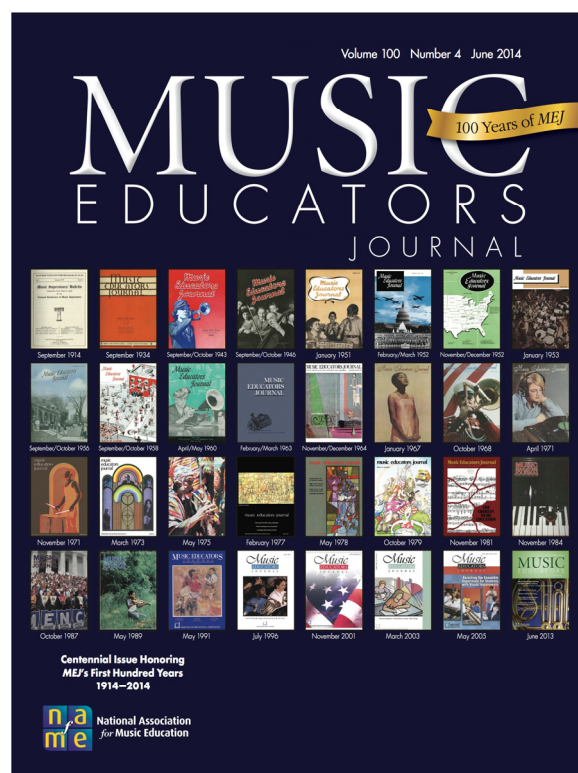


Figure 14. *Music Educators Journal*, June 2014.

3.2. Hypotheses

The visual analysis protocol developed by Bell includes the statement of hypotheses [24]. Two a priori hypotheses were identified for this project after the initial phases of data coding and analysis. Evidence for the two hypotheses is presented in the following sections, together with contextual discussion related to the analysis.

3.2.1. Imagery Related to Nationalism Increased During Times of Conflict

The genesis of this hypothesis was the March 2014 (volume 100, number 3) special focus issue on the military and music education. That issue highlighted the ways in which the military has supported, paralleled, and expanded upon the efforts of civilian music education. Articles also explored the roles in military music of professional musicians, women, and African Americans, among others. The current analysis indicates that editors and/or staffers responsible for *Music Educators Journal* most frequently responded to periods of conflict with nationalistic cover content on three occasions: (1) during the Great Depression; (2) during World War II; and (3) following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks.

Music Educators Journal had high production values, rigorous content, and widespread dissemination during the period encompassing World War II (1939–1945). *MEJ* portrayed nationalism on 15 covers during that period. Patriotic colors, war-themed photographs, and nationalistic content were prominent on all covers from January 1942 through February/March 1945. Many covers were emblazoned with a large “V” for victory, on which was superimposed the text “Music Education in Wartime.” Other text elements included the phrases “American Unity Through Music” (March/April 1941 May/June 1942) and “Music in the National Effort” (April 1942), “Music for Victory” (May/June 1943), and “Music Educators War Emergency Program” (February/March 1945). Five cover photographs during the period featured bands of the armed forces and instrumentalists in military uniforms (September/October 1943, November/December 1943, February/March 1944,

May/June 1944, and September/October 1944). Women were prominently featured in four of these five cover photographs.

There have been eight nationalistic covers since 1945:

1. February/March 1952—photo of the U.S. Capitol Building with fighter jets overhead and a military band below
2. June/July 1959—photo of a young boy admiring a saxophonist in a military band
3. October 1968—photo of a decorated trombonist in military band attire
4. February 1975—graphic representation of a red, white and blue treble clef
5. April 1979—still life photo of an American flag, a metronome, a judge's gavel, and a carving of words including "tort", "due process", "malpractice", "liability", etc.
6. February 1988—still life photo of an American flag, a trumpet, a chalk stove holder, black and white photos of military bands and flags in classrooms, etc.
7. November 2001—photo of an American flag, with the words "O say, can you sing?"
8. March 2015—photo of a military band in a parade

In addition, the logo of the National Recovery Administration appeared on journal covers from 1933 to 1935, along with the phrase "We do our part". This corresponded to a national effort in support of the New Deal established by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the Great Depression of the 1930s.

As stated earlier, this analysis was of the cover imagery only. An examination of the article content within the journal indicates that, on occasion, there were influences on these cover designs beyond nationalistic expression. For instance, the February/March 1952 cover photo (#1 above) was of United States Air Force Band that would be performing in that year's national convention of the Association. The February 1975 cover (#4 above) may have related to an article about American composers. Additionally, the April 1979 cover (#5 above) reflected the content of an article about legal issues affecting music teachers. None of these three *MEJ* issues indicated these considerations on their covers, leaving readers to interpret the meanings of the nationalistic/patriotic images presented to them.

It is perhaps not surprising that MENC, through its journal *MEJ*, would seek to promote ties to nationalistic and patriotic themes, especially during the years surrounding World War II. At that time, music education in the United States was becoming formalized as an official curricular subject in multiple states, and MENC was beginning to support what would become a strong presence in educational research [19,21]. The reflection of patriotic and nationalistic themes was both a nod to the prevailing tenor of the populace and a strategic tactic to further the political goals of MENC and its membership [14,16,21].

3.2.2. The Representation of People Diversified as Time Progressed

Images of people have appeared on 294 of the 644 (45.7%) covers of *Music Educators Journal* during its first 102 years. Many of these images include groups of people or large ensembles. In these cases, and for other reasons, an individual's gender, race and ethnicity were often difficult to discern. For that reason, analysis of people-centered imagery proceeded cautiously. It is acknowledged that the results reported here may reflect a degree of stereotyping and oversimplification.

The depiction of people was marked with milestones at various points in the history of *Music Educators Journal* covers:

- First Man: October 1926 (George Oscar Bowen)
- First Woman: March 1927 (Mabelle Glenn)
- First Child: March 1938 (multiple children in a collage of performing ensembles)
- First Non-Caucasian: April 1945 (adult Huichol musician from Jalisco, Mexico)

- First Solo Musician: September/October 1945 (sepia rendering of a female trumpet player in military uniform)
- First Prominent Depiction of a Black Person: January 1967 (reproduction of James Chapin's 1928 painting *Ruby Green Singing*, along with a full-page description of the painting)
- First Photo of a Black Person: December 1968 (group of boys from the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys of the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, DC, USA)
- First Hispanic/Latino Children: January 1970 (two boys playing guitar and singing)
- First Asian Child: November 1979 (Chinese boy playing the pipa)
- First Asian Adult: April 1989 (female orchestra teacher)

Analysis suggests intentionality in the placement of the Black boy on the cover of the December 1968 issue. The time-to-publication for an issue of *MEJ* in 1968 was approximately five months. The December 1968 issue went to press in early July, three months after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Using that issue as an inflection point in the journal's history, 202 photographs of people have appeared on the subsequent 336 covers (some covers contained more than one photo). Inferred race/ethnicity of individuals in these photos is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Inferred Race/Ethnicity of Individuals in Cover Photos since December 1968.

Inferred Race/Ethnicity	# of Covers	%
Caucasian/White	98	48.5
Mixed Group	62	30.7
Black	26	12.9
Asian	7	3.5
Hispanic/Latino	5	2.5
Native American	2	1.0
Middle Eastern	1	0.5
Unclear	1	0.5

This analysis revealed perpetuation of a strong element of racial stereotyping, where Asian people are often associated with excellence at playing string instruments. This image has a legitimate foundation in the strength of string music education in Asian cultures. However, the stereotype emerges when string instruments become reflexively associated with Asian musicians and not associated with individuals from other racial or ethnic backgrounds [37,38]. Asian people, or those with Asian physical characteristics, have appeared on seven covers of *Music Educators Journal*. The individual is playing or conducting stringed instruments in each of these seven cover images:

- November 1979: Chinese boy playing the pipa
- April 1989: Female orchestra teacher and female cello player
- December 1989: Preschool girls playing violins
- January 1998: Sarah Chang, violin soloist with the New York Philharmonic
- January 2002: Female middle school violinist
- January 2004: Yo-Yo Ma, cellist
- June 2009: Female violist

This analysis suggests that gender representation has been equal and stable since the first depictions of people appeared on covers of *Music Educators Journal*. This may reflect the strong numbers of women among the ranks of music teachers in the United States [39]. Representation of racial and ethnic diversity followed more slowly, but increased as time progressed. Hispanics/Latinos have been underrepresented relative to their demographic proportion of the overall population of the United States. This has persisted since the first depiction of Latino/Hispanic children appeared on an *MEJ* cover in 1970. The overall proportion of Latinos/Hispanics in the United States at that time was 4.5%; it is 18% today.

3.3. Intentionality and the First Images of Black People

The editorial oversight of *Music Educators Journal* and its predecessors has varied over time. The journal began with a series of clearly defined editors, including Peter W. Dykema (1914–1921), George Oscar Bowen (1921–1926), and Paul J. Weaver (1926–1930). Clifford V. Buttlemann shared editorial responsibility with Edward Baily Birge and Charles M. Dennis in various capacities from 1930 to 1958. Bonnie C. Kowall, an MENC staff editor, then oversaw the journal until 1965 when Charles B. Fowler assumed editorial oversight through 1971. A series of staff editors followed until the position of Academic Editor was established in 1998. Academic Editors have included Mark Fonder (1998–2002), Maud Hickey (2002–2006), Mitchell Robinson (2006–2010), Patrick K. Freer (2010–2016), and Katy Strand (2016–present).

With so many editors serving in different capacities, it is difficult to discern elements of intentionality with regard to decisions about *MEJ*'s cover content. There is, however, one series of image placements that is intriguing: the first representations of Black individuals on *MEJ* covers. The first image of a Black individual to appear on a *Music Educators Journal* cover may have been in June/July 1956. That cover (Figure 15) contains a black and white photograph of The Golden Anniversary Band, Orchestra and Chorus and various MENC dignitaries. Enlargement of the photo, though not conclusive, suggests that a few members of the chorus were Black. Given that the focus was the MENC Anniversary, this was likely an unintentional (i.e., non-purposeful) placement of Black individuals in an *MEJ* cover photo.

The inference of intentionality in the February/March 1960 cover is more persuasive. This cover (Figure 16) includes a variety of large and small ensemble photos. A blurry photo of a choral ensemble is placed in the middle of the bottom row. Enlargement of that photo suggests that many, if not all, of the singers were Black. The visual semiotic analysis conducted for this study indicates that the placement of this photo is intentionally strong, both because of its vertical positioning on the page and because of the fact that turning pages in a periodical compels individuals to look toward the bottom right hand corner of the page and then gaze to the left as the page is turned—precisely the location of the photo in question. If this placement was intentional, the likely “placer” of the image was Bonnie C. Kowall, the MENC staffer who served as editor of that issue. Did Kowall purposefully place the first overt image of Black individuals on an *MEJ* cover? Visual semiotic analysis suggests this as a possibility.

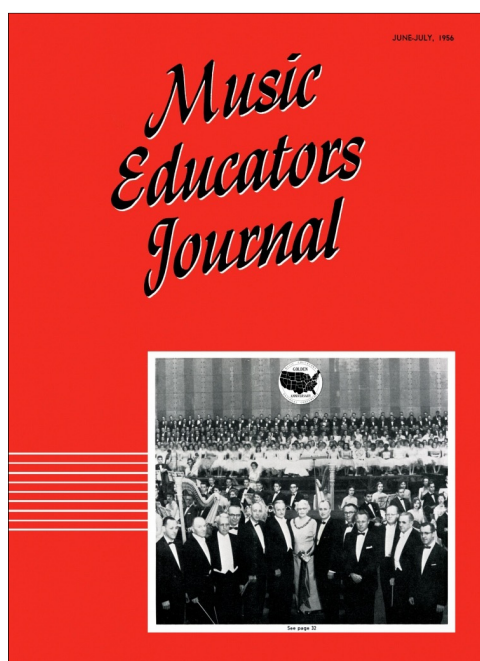


Figure 15. *Music Educators Journal*, June/July 1956.

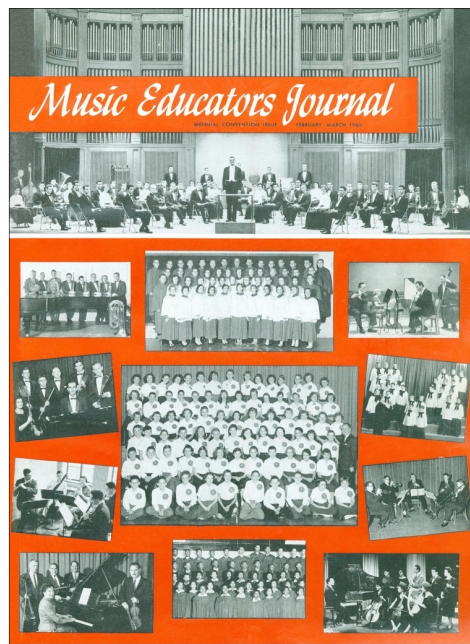


Figure 16. *Music Educators Journal*, February/March 1960.

A stronger case can be made concerning the reproduction of Chapin's *Ruby Green Singing* (January 1967) (Figure 17) and the photo of the Black boy chorister (December 1968) (Figure 18). The editor for both issues was Charles B. Fowler. Again, visual semiotic analysis reveals that the strongest position for a human figure in a photograph is to appear on the left side of the image, with eyesight directed into the center of the photo. Though this was the positioning of *Ruby Green*, Fowler could not have altered Chapin's painting. However, the December 1968 image of the boy choristers is clearly cropped from a larger photo. The placement of the Black boy within that photo could have been anywhere, yet he was placed in the strongest possible position. Again, the cover appeared at a time of racial unrest following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Analysis suggests that Fowler was making a purposeful, intentional statement when he decided on the final cover design.



Figure 17. *Music Educators Journal*, January 1967.



Figure 18. *Music Educators Journal*, December 1968.

4. Conclusions and Future Directions

This content analysis suggests that the covers of *Music Educators Journal* contain evidence of purposeful design and intent. These intentions were often simply about the aesthetic character, and communicative properties of the covers. However, on occasion, it appears likely that those with editorial oversight made decisions to “describe a situation, analyze a historical process, or tell a story” [17]. These decisions varied over time, and were related both to societal norms and the editors of the day. For instance, the first photographs of women appeared during the 1920s as they earned the right to vote (1920), the Equal Rights Amendment was introduced in Congress (1923), the first female governor was elected in Wyoming (1925), and women competed for the first time as Olympic athletes (1928). Furthermore, images of racial and ethnic diversity increased in number following the civil unrest of the 1960s, allowing more people the opportunity to envision a future involving music [20]. Both of these periods coincided with tenures of *MEJ* editors Paul Weaver and Charles Fowler who had become leaders in the field at that point in their careers.

The nationalistic imagery found on *MEJ* covers resonates with recent critical examinations of the interactions of politics, patriotism, and nationalism [40,41]. Much of MENC/NAfME’s work during the first half of the 20th century was to establish and strengthen the role of music education in American public schools. The organization’s leadership encouraged the development of research and philosophy as critical areas for development of the profession. Each of these efforts sought acceptance of music education within the established systems of elementary, secondary, and higher education. It was imperative that music education be included in the major federal legislative initiatives regarding education in the periods coinciding with the two World Wars. This perspective helps explain why, perhaps, nationalistic imagery appeared prominently on *MEJ* covers during the military activities of the early 20th century but not during the late 1960s and early 1970s—a period highlighted by populism, individualism, civil unrest, and distain for the United States’ military actions in Vietnam.

The covers of *Music Educators Journal* are part of the historical record of the profession. Future research might seek to identify relationships between these cover images and the articles, notices, and

advertisements found in the body of the journal issues. Though *MEJ*'s editors were likely aware that they were contributing historical documents to scholars of the future, the editors were also aware of the political narratives the journal would convey to the thousands of MENC/NAfME members whose first contact with a new issue would be its cover. The content of *MEJ* covers can, therefore, be considered both as elements of the individual journal issues they contain and as unique entities designed for instant communication through visual and textual elements. As a result, the narratives conveyed by *MEJ*'s 644 covers were often as powerful as the articles in the pages that followed.

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